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HONG KONG/UK/PRC: DEMOCRATIC BEGINNINGS

Hong Kong took a significant step toward representative democracy on September 15 when first-ever direct elections were held for 18 of 60 legislative council (Legco) seats. The liberal United Democrats of Hong Kong (UDHK) and their allies did better than projected, winning 16 seats. Beijing-supported candidates lost all contests, as did the conservative, business-oriented Liberal Democratic Federation, which favors close cooperation with the PRC. Voter turnout was 39%, well below the 50% the government hoped for but still higher than any previous Hong Kong election.

Political parties began forming in Hong Kong only last year.

usually rubber stamped government decisions. In 1985 functional constituencies (bankers, teachers, etc.) first held indirect elections to Legco.

In the contest for 21 functional constituency seats on September 13, conservatives predominated. A further 17 Legco members will be appointed by the Hong Kong governor. (The remaining 4 members serve *ex officio*.)

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The UDHK leader, attorney Martin Lee, an outspoken advocate of democracy. Lee refuses to be ignored, and immediately after the election called for dialogue with PRC representatives in Hong Kong.

The new political lineup

Lee is also using the election results to press for changes that would give liberals in government a voice in Hong Kong affairs. Traditionally the governor has appointed conservative business and professional representatives to the policy-making executive council (Exco) and the Legco, which has

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